

Mercy House

Serving the Underserved in Urban Flint



By Rev. Dr. Bradley J. Yops, Mission Pastor of Franklin Avenue Mission, with Cheri Fish, Mission Editor

It was one of those weeks when the basic needs of life were intensified. Not that every week isn't a challenge, but this week the necessity for adequate housing for the homeless — especially women and children — was magnified.

The night before, a fire bomb hit the home of a mother and her three children. They lost everything — their home, clothes, food, furniture — everything! They asked Franklin Avenue Mission if we could help them with these basics we take for granted. Housing for people in crisis situations in Flint, Michigan, is limited. We helped them with food and clothes and placed them in a temporary shelter.

That same evening, a young mother who is trying to get her life straight also sought our assistance for housing. She had been couch cruising and had run out of options of where she and her child within could stay. It was obvious her life required more than a roof over her head. She was about to deliver, and she wasn't under any medical care. Again we were able to meet her immediate needs. The clinic that operates at our mission was able to attend to the overdue medical care, and she was placed in temporary housing.

That evening, I thought to myself, we were becoming the hands, feet, face, and voice of Jesus to these two families, but we could have done much more had our future Mercy House for Women and Children been operative. The underserved, urban poor of America (and in particular in Flint) are crying out to the church — like the challenge the Lord placed before Isaiah: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Hear am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8)

Franklin Avenue Mission (FAM) is located in Flint, one of the poorest cities of America, where 46 percent of the general population and 66 percent of the children live below the poverty level. On the east side, these percentages increase to 80 percent. Mercy House for Women and Children is being planned in an attempt to break the cycle of poverty and decrease the potential for abuse. This will be accomplished by housing women and children in a safe, caring, loving environment where the best practices of parenting and relationship building can be modeled and taught. We

believe this component to our ministry will benefit the participants by providing a different view of family and living. This will ultimately complement our theology of "Right to Life" and protect the unborn, precious in the eyes of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

On June 23, 2017, at the LWML Convention in Albuquerque, a vote was cast, influencing the future of a once-forgotten neighborhood on Flint's Eastside. The \$100,000 grant approved that day will begin the remodel of an existing house in this neighborhood, transforming it into Mercy House for Women and Children, adjacent to Franklin Avenue Mission. The word spread quickly — all the way to Flint — as excited convention goers from Michigan communicated with friends back home, "The Mission Grant has been approved!" The sixteen LCMS churches and 500 volunteers that operate biweekly the Franklin Diner, ROCK Children's Program, and Clothing Closet were thrilled to hear the news and know the impact this grant will have on the Flint community. God is truly working through these "boots-on-ground" missionaries! Q



This abandoned house is the site for the future home for women and children.